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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM: Douglas J. MacEachin
Director of Soviet Analysis

SUBJECT: Reporting on Civilian Influence on
Soviet National Security Policy

The attached memorandum is based on fragmentary information and, as such, is necessarily speculative. In view of the potential implications of the subject, however, we thought it useful to share with you the substance of and our preliminary views on the reporting.

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Douglas J. MacEachin

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Attachment:
Memorandum dated 22 Nov 85

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SUBJECT: Reporting of Civilian Influence on Soviet
National Security Policy

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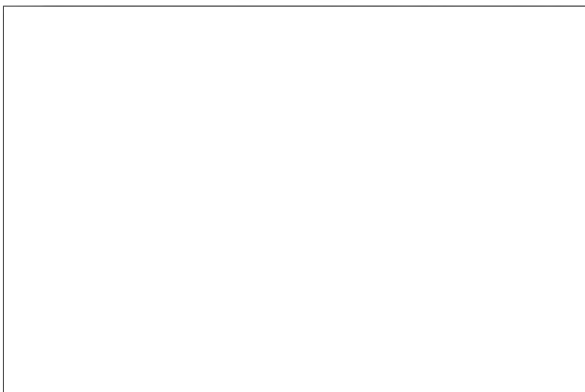


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SUBJECT: Reporting of Civilian Influence on Soviet
National Security Policy

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22 November 1985

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Signs of Civilian Influence on Soviet
National Security Policy

Summary

[redacted] a group
including civilians has been formed to advise the USSR
Ministry of Defense. [redacted]

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If in fact such a group has been established--and given
the nature of the evidence we must reserve judgment--it
would represent a marked departure from the situation under
Brezhnev when the uniformed military maintained a virtual
monopoly on information and advice on defense issues. Its
influence would depend to a large degree on the extent of
its independence from the uniformed military. If it was
organized to give the Politburo or Defense Council an
independent perspective on arms control, resource demands,
and other defense-related issues it could portend an
important change in the decision-making process. Gorbachev
could use the group's information or recommendations to
reduce the military's present near monopoly on defense
policy. [redacted] his political mentor Andropov intended
to create such a group to advise the Defense Council on
military matters. [redacted]

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If, on the other hand, the General Staff took the
initiative to form such a group, it would be far less likely
to present views that differ in important aspects from those
of the General Staff. The General Staff may have felt that
such a group could assist it in the increasing competition
for economic resources as well as blunt efforts to establish
a civilian group outside its control. In either case, we
may be seeing the first sign of competition, albeit a
limited one, to the professional military's traditional
dominance over all aspects of defense policy. [redacted]

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Note: This memorandum was prepared in the Office of Soviet Analysis by
[redacted] Comments and queries are welcome
and may be addressed to Chief, European Assessments Division, [redacted]
[redacted] Chief, Domestic Policy Division, [redacted]

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1. Background. Aleksey Arbatov of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO)

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[redacted] was a member of a Ministry of Defense group responsible for "military doctrine."¹ The comment came as an aside during a discussion of SDI and intermediate-range nuclear forces, and he did not elaborate further. Arbatov is the son of Georgiy Arbatov, a member of the party Central Committee, director of the USA/Canada Institute (IUSAC), and reputed adviser to General Secretary Gorbachev.² The younger Arbatov specializes in US strategic and military policy, an expertise that--along with his prominent father--could have commended him for membership in such a group.

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2. [redacted]

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Andropov planned to create a staff composed of civilian defense experts and retired officers to advise the Defense Council--previously the exclusive responsibility of the General Staff. Andropov's objective

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was "to break the monopoly" of active duty military officers over the control of military information.

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also has claimed that such a group has been organized.

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3. Why Might An Advisory Group Have Been Formed?

Andropov may have been prompted to seek formation of such a group as a consequence of his experience as KGB Chairman.

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by 1981 the KGB was being tasked with a greater role in collecting and analyzing strategic and arms control information. Having become accustomed to seeing such assessments--some of which may well have differed from that of the General Staff--Andropov may have decided to authorize civilian access to classified

¹ The Soviet term voyennaya doktrina is routinely, but often too narrowly, translated as military doctrine. This term, however, captures only one aspect of the Soviet usage, which in many cases is used broadly to imply national security policy. We believe it likely that the latter is the sense

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military information to provide a check on the advice and policy proposals of the General Staff. [REDACTED]

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4. Gorbachev may also be uneasy about relying too heavily on military advice. His emphasis on economic revitalization gives him an incentive to reexamine previous assessments of the military and strategic threat facing the USSR. [REDACTED] Gorbachev has already agreed to augment staffs of analysts in the two senior civilian think-tanks, IMEMO and IUSAC, and assign more institute specialists to the Soviet Embassy in Washington in order to improve analysis of the United States. Some civilians--for instance, Academy of Sciences Vice President Yevgeniy Velikhov and Director of the Space Research Institute Roal'd Sagdeyev--have considerable technical expertise on SDI and might be potential members of such an advisory group. [REDACTED]

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5. Alternatively, such a group might have been created at the initiative of the MOD itself, looking to tap civilian support for its programs and perhaps even utilizing civilian advice to help determine possible reactions to arms control proposals or advise on new weapons technologies emerging in the West. Civilian advisers--particularly those with important party connections--could be useful in assisting the military to gain support for its programs in an era of growing competition for economic resources. It is clear from Soviet writings that the General Staff recognizes that the relationship between technological advance and economic strength has grown increasingly important for military power, and may believe such a group could play a valuable role in future planning. The fact that Arbatov stated the group worked for the Ministry of Defense, rather than the Politburo or Defense Council, suggests that the military controls its input and composition. [REDACTED]

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6. What Might Such a Group Do? It seems doubtful that the group would advise the MOD on narrow questions of military doctrine. The General Staff has always formulated

3 [REDACTED] characterized the Ministry of Defense as a "uniformed service" staffed wholly by active duty, retired, and reserve military officers. If this new group is an institutional component of the MOD, we anticipate confirmation in the next year or two. [REDACTED]

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doctrine and jealously guarded against civilian interference in this area, which it considers one of its primary missions. All evidence points to continued General Staff control over formulating military manuals, generating doctrine at the General Staff Academy and in the Main Operations and Military Science Directorates, and testing it in military exercises. Arbatov--who is not a specialist on either US or Soviet doctrine--probably used the term "military doctrine" in the broad sense of national security policy, where civilian input appears more likely. [REDACTED]

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7. A logical subject matter to tap civilian expertise might be on arms control policy. Civilian advice, for example, might be valued by the political leadership as a check on the assessments of the Ministry on the impact in the West of Soviet arms control policy. While the General Staff has in the past monopolized information about Soviet weapons programs--even leaving civilian negotiators from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the dark--academics like Arbatov are broadly familiar with both US and Soviet systems from the voluminous unclassified literature in the West and might be able to make useful contributions. Moreover, the revised draft of the party program, which has just been published, underscores the party's role in formulating "doctrine" and defense policy. This may reflect concern to assert civilian influence in the areas where doctrinal questions touch on major issues of resource allocation, like arms control policy.⁴ [REDACTED]

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8. Tentative Conclusions. While the evidence is fragmentary, an advisory group on military issues, including civilians and perhaps exclusively civilian, may well exist. Either plausible explanation for the civilian advisory group--to provide a check on military recommendations or to act as a booster for the military within the civilian leadership--suggests that the uniformed

⁴ The previous party program issued in 1961 did not mention party control over military doctrine. Although other military writings, like the classified versions of Military Thought, have acknowledged this right, General Secretaries have availed themselves of the prerogative to different degrees. Stalin and Khrushchev, for instance, were considerably more intrusive than their successors to date. [REDACTED]

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military's perspective on political-military issues is coming under closer scrutiny than it did under Brezhnev.

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9. The long-run significance of such a body, however, would depend on the degree of its independence and the attitude of key Politburo leaders about the objectivity of past counsel from the Defense Ministry and General Staff. If, [redacted] the political leadership took the initiative to create such a group in order to break the monopoly of the uniformed military on national security issues, it could represent a significant departure in decision-making and ultimately policy. Even so, significant political and institutional barriers remain to be overcome before a group with this charter could achieve major influence. [redacted]

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10. On the other hand, if the military took the initiative to create the group--departing from past practice--it is unlikely to have a dramatic effect on the process of national security policymaking, defense allocation, or the formulation of arms control policy. Without a clear mandate from the political leadership, such a group would be more easily denied the degree of access to classified information or top decisionmakers that would allow it to become a major factor in policy formulation.

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